

# Chapter 10




## Observer Life

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## **I. Introduction**

This chapter provides information about the day-to-day routine of West Coast Groundfish Observers and describes expectations for Observer performance. The chapter includes:

- Guidelines for communicating with vessels
- Checklists of tasks that must be completed before and after each trip
- Descriptions, recommendations and care of personal, sampling and safety gear
- Considerations for Being on Call and Travel
- Explanation of the data debriefing process and Observer evaluations
- Requirements for maintaining position as a WCGOP Observer

## **II. First Days**

### **Start Dates and Contacts**

At the conclusion of training, observers will travel to their assigned ports and provide the date they are prepared to accept an assignment. If there are any changes in the date of availability for deployment, AOI and the field coordinator must be informed. .



**Tip\*** Contact information for program staff and observers can be found in the WCGOP database.

It is the observer's responsibility to provide AOI with updated contact information, and to keep a mailing address, email address and phone number(s) up-to-date in the WCGOP database.

## **Getting to Know the Port**

A coordinator, lead or year-round observer will arrange an orientation tour of the assigned port(s) for each new observer close to their start date. The port orientation tour should include vessels, docks, local processing plants, local US Coast Guard, and an introduction to other port observers and to local state biologists (port samplers and port biologists). It should also include an overview of local responsibilities, including any expectations for providing information or aid to the local state biologists.

The coordinator, lead observer and other observers in the assigned port group are excellent sources of information for locating housing, places to eat, local entertainment, and other personal needs. Many have been in the area for a few years and are very knowledgeable of the port.



## **III. Communication and Contacting Vessels**

### **Contacting Vessels**

Observers will be assigned vessels by their coordinator or lead observer. Coordinators supply observers with vessel names, vessel owner/operator names and phone numbers. Vessel contacts are also available in the database. Once this information is received, the observer is responsible for contacting the vessel owner/captain.

Guidelines for contacting captains by phone:

- When calling the vessel owner or captain, do so in a friendly and professional manner.
- State your name and association with the WCGOP.
- Make it a habit to begin with a professional introduction to whoever answers the phone.

Example:

Hi, my name is Joe Smith. I am the West Coast Groundfish Observer in Port Group. Could I please speak with *Vessel Owner/Captain's Name*?

- If the vessel owner/operator is not available, leave a message with your name and number and request that they return your call.
- If there is no reply from the vessel owner/operator within 2 days, call again. Do not give up.
- Once contact has been made with the vessel owner/operator, establish the reason for the call. Confirm that they received a notification letter from the WCGOP that explains the requirement to carry an observer and explain that you are one of the observers who will be working with them.
- Obtain the following information and notify the lead observer and field coordinator for the port group:

1. Vessel location (dock, plant, etc.)
2. If vessel has current USCG Safety Decal
3. Meeting time for vessel safety orientation
4. Best contact numbers (cell, boat phone)
5. Departure date and time for 1st trip
6. Approximate length of trips
7. Vessel type/gear type (if not known)

- Address any questions or concerns they might have in working with observers or the WCGOP. If there are any questions, complaints or uncertainties that you cannot address to the satisfaction of the vessel owner/operator, refer them to your coordinator or lead observer.

If a vessel owner/operator proves difficult to contact by phone, other methods of making contact, such as leaving a note on the vessel must be employed. All attempts to contact the vessel must be documented. If a vessel owner or captain cannot be contacted, inform the field coordinator or lead observer in a timely manner.



### **Vessel Communication Log**

The database communications log is used by lead observers and coordinators to track communications with vessels and to ensure calls are made and not duplicated. It also provides a record of contacts should vessels claim they were not notified.

Observers **must** log all communications with vessels in the database in a timely manner. This should include initial contacts, notifications of selection, arrangements for safety inspections, notification of departure times, cancellations, and any other communications with vessels or pertaining to coverage of vessels. Any communications that might be construed as harassment must be documented. It is also a good idea to document in the Observer Logbook communications with lead and other observers as well as WCGOP staff.

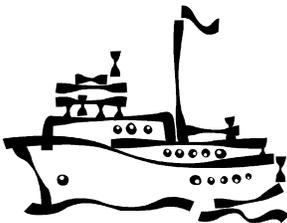
Communications must be recorded daily. The communications section of the Observer Logbook is used to record communications that take place when away from port (at sea, on travel, etc.). These communications must be logged in the database at the earliest possible time.

## **Vessel Safety Checks**

A Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist should be completed several days before the first trip, at minimum. (See Observer Logbook for Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist.) Ideally, vessel safety inspections should be done soon after making initial contact (approximately 1 month prior to the selection period). This gives vessels time to correct any deficiencies before the start of the selection period. **Do not wait to do the safety orientation until the day before, or the day of, the planned departure for the first fishing trip!** It is very problematic to discover a vessel lacks necessary safety features, such as adequate life raft capacity to accommodate the observer and crew, at the time that the vessel is ready to depart. Vessels are not typically issued waivers for failure to meet safety obligations.

The Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist must be completed and mailed or faxed to the coordinator prior to embarking on the first trip. If this is not possible (example: observer was sent on travel and arrived after business hours, with no place to mail or fax), call the coordinator's office and leave a verbal confirmation that the vessel has passed inspection. A copy of the Safety Checklist must be mailed or faxed as soon as possible after disembarkation.

Doing safety orientations in pairs is suggested. Two observers working together are likely to do a more thorough inspection than one. Also, it will not be necessary to take additional time from the captain or crew to complete a second inspection should both observers be assigned to the boat during the same selection period.



## **IV. Before and After a Trip**

### **Observer Trip Notification Phone System**

The WCGOP utilizes a call-in system (available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) to track observers

departures (embarkation) and returns (disembarkation). The Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) is operated by Answering Northwest, Inc.

Since each observer is issued a personal Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), it is vital that NOAA Fisheries, PSMFC, and AOI are aware when observers are at-sea in the event that an EPIRB is set off. If an observer's personal EPIRB goes off, the Coast Guard will contact NOAA Fisheries, PSMFC, or AOI and inquire if there is a real emergency. The OTNPS provides a simple and quick way for any of these groups to determine if the EPIRB in question accompanied an observer to sea. The OTNPS potentially reduces the time it would take for the Coast Guard to respond in a real emergency.

Observers are required to phone Answering Northwest, Inc. at **206-444-4268** immediately prior to embarking on a vessel and immediately after disembarking a vessel. Upon embarkation, leave the following six pieces of information:

**Embarking:**

1. First and last name
2. Vessel name
3. Departure port
4. Estimated time of departure
5. Estimated length of trip
6. Cell number

**Note** - Do not include the date and time of the call as it will be recorded automatically by Answering Northwest, Inc.

Upon disembarking a vessel, call the answering service again and leave the following three pieces of information:

### **Disembarking:**

1. First and last name
2. Vessel name
3. Arrival port

**Note** - The time and date of the call will be recorded automatically.

**Remember** - Observers are required to notify Answering NW, Inc. before and after every trip *even if it has been reported to the coordinator*. **There will be no exceptions to this routine.**

### **Observer Checklist: Before Every Trip**

- Contact vessel owner/captain and arrange to meet at the vessel.
- Complete Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist. (See Observer Logbook for Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist.)
- **Mail or fax** a copy of the Vessel Safety Orientation Checklist to the coordinator **prior** to departing on the first trip. Discuss any safety concerns or issues with the coordinator.
- Review sampling procedures for the fishery to be observed.
- Ensure personal and sampling gear is in order and scales have been lubed and calibrated. Make sure to bring extra pencils and **plenty of forms**.
- Observers should be on the vessel with gear stowed and ready to depart **at least 30 minutes prior to vessel departure time**. Depending on port location, this may mean arriving at the docks an hour or more before the trip's departure. Often there will be an unforeseen delay but it is vital that the Observer does not cause it!

- **Call the Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) prior to embarkation.**

### **Checklist: After Every Trip**

- Clean, organize and pack gear before landing. Ensure that no Observer gear, such as a survival suit or EPIRB, remains on the vessel.
- Make sure all necessary data from the Vessel Logbook has been gathered (if applicable).
- Ask the vessel when they anticipate making their next fishing trip.
- **Call the Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) upon disembarkation.**
- Obtain the fish ticket number (landing receipt number) at the delivery or as soon as possible.
- Finish paperwork and enter trip data into the database within 3 days, at most, from the end of the trip.

### **After the First Trip**

Observers should contact their debriefer if they have questions about data collection before, during or after a trip. After going on the first trip, or after observing a new gear type or fishery, observers should contact a debriefer to discuss the trip. Debriefers will review the data from the trip and, depending on the quality of the data, may make arrangements to meet in person to go over the data and to discuss sampling procedures.



## **V. Gear**

### **Observer Personal Gear**

Dressing to work on the deck of a vessel off the West Coast can be challenging; usually, the conditions are cold (45°F or colder) and wet, but in the summer there are days when the

outside temperature can reach into the 70's or above. A suggested list of clothes and belongings Observers may want to bring to sea is provided below. This list is not exhaustive and personal needs must be considered. If you have questions on what to bring to sea, ask for advice from the WCGOP staff or an active Observer. Rather than taking a lot of clothes, focus on bringing items that can be layered. Layered clothing provides protection from the elements and helps prevent overheating if the weather gets warm. Synthetic or wool materials are recommended because they have a greater ability than cotton to retain body heat when wet. Inexpensive clothes are also recommended, since the smell of fish is difficult to remove from fabric. Some Observers find appropriate, inexpensive work clothes at Army-Navy Surplus or used-clothing stores.



Here are some suggestions for personal gear needed at-sea:

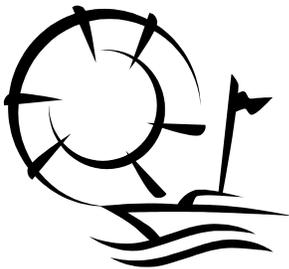
- Toiletries (towel, soap, toothbrush, tooth paste, deodorant, travel size shampoo, wet wipes)
- Personal medications
- Special dietary needs
- Extra contact lenses or glasses
- Water
- 2-3 pairs of socks
- Clothes that can be layered for warm weather (thermal, sweatshirt, fleece)
- Baseball hat, cap
- Sunglasses, sun block and chap stick
- Small first-aid kit
- Small pocketknife
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Sleeping bag/blanket
- Travel pillow
- Sea bags (small duffel bags are ideal) should be packed so that items can be easily accessed.
- Reading material, knitting, radio/walkman/mp3 player, etc.

### *Considerations for Fishing Trips*

- Exposure to wet conditions, even when it's not raining.
- Exposure to direct sunlight.
- Exposure to wide range of temperatures and quick weather changes.
- Possible exposure to strong wind conditions.
- LIMITED amount of space aboard the vessel.
- Observer may or may not have a bunk.
- Vessels may not have a head (bathroom) or a shower.
- Dietary restrictions: discuss with the captain and/or the cook before departing. Example: It is unlikely a vessel will cater to the needs of special diets such as vegan/vegetarian, so food items should be brought along by the observer to ensure a proper diet.

### **Observer Safety and Sampling Gear**

NOAA Fisheries and PSMFC supply sampling and safety equipment for observers. Observers should check sampling gear to see that it is in good working order when issued. It is the responsibility of each Observer **to maintain** their gear and return it in the best condition possible. Observers may be charged for misuse or neglect of sampling/safety gear. Observers rely on their equipment to perform their sampling duties, so making gear cleaning and upkeep a daily routine is recommended.



### *Observer Safety Gear*

Safety gear is the most important equipment issued to Observers and requires routine maintenance and inspection, which is documented in the Observer Logbook. Observers, assisted by staff, will inspect all safety gear when issued to ensure that everything is in working order. The WCGOP provides the following safety gear:

- Immersion Suit (see Appendix U: Immersion Suit Care and Inspection on page 72)
- Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)
- Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Firefly Strobe for Survival Suit
- C-Strobe for PFD
- Whistle
- First Aid Kit

In addition, Observers are issued gear to help prevent injuries such as safety glasses, hard hats, back braces, earplugs, and carbon monoxide detectors.

Safety equipment is provided to help survive an emergency at sea and to reduce reliance on the vessel's safety equipment. The immersion suit should be kept in a safe place that is dry and easily accessible at all times. It is not a good idea to keep the observer's immersion suit with the crew's since it is likely they are not easily accessible and depending on vessel diligence regarding maintenance, may not be in very good condition. WCGOP observers usually keep their issued EPIRB in their immersion suit, which is another reason not to mix observer immersion suits with those of the crew. It is important to retain the original immersion suit issued at training. Proper maintenance for all safety gear is a priority for WCGOP observers. More information regarding safety gear is located in Chapter 9, "Health and Safety Information".

### ***Observer Sampling Gear***

The majority of sampling gear will be issued at training (see Appendix S: List of Observer-Issued Equipment on page 70).

### **Scales**

Observers are supplied with at least two scales:

- A 6.0-pound hand-held brass scale for items up to 6.0 pounds.
- A Chatillon platform scale for items weighing more than 6.0 pounds.

The Chatillon platform scales have a gauge that can be read to a tenth of a pound. Observers are expected to take accurate weights in the field. There may be circumstances when the most accurate reading is to the nearest pound. Document those instances in the Observer Logbook.

### **How to Care for Sampling Gear**

1. Keep gear in a secure place aboard the vessel. Avoid leaving gear on the vessel's deck. If there is no alternative to leaving it out on deck, be sure that it is well secured and protected from the weather.
2. Keep forms, books, pencils, pens, and unused equipment in a dry safe place, such as the forepeak, stateroom, or a secure lazarette.
3. Keep all gear as clean as possible. Use deck hoses to rinse slime, scales, and blood off the baskets, deck sheets, length boards, clipboards, scalpel, and knife after each use. Rinse gear with fresh water after each trip.
4. Keep metal parts clean and well oiled. The lubricant oil issued is food-grade and can be kept on deck.
5. Do not put scales, scalpels, knives, thumb counters, measuring tapes, or other metal objects in plastic bags or boxes when they are wet or they will rust.
6. The platform scale **MUST** be kept well oiled. Use the food grade lubricant oil on all moving parts **daily**. Use the Lanicoat spray on the underside of the scale and on the notched reading beam before and after trips (see Appendix T: Chatillon Flatbed Scale Care and Maintenance on page 71).

7. If something does happen to the issued gear, document what happened in the Observer Logbook. Observers will not be charged for gear damage or loss due to uncontrollable, documented circumstances.
8. Keep sampling gear consolidated. This will minimize the chance of forgetting something when disembarking and will be appreciated by the vessel crew during the trip.
9. **Do not take the laptop computer to sea and do not check it when traveling by air. It should be a carry on item for all flights.**

If replacement gear is required, contact the PSMFC or a WCGOP coordinator.



## **VI. Being on Call - Observer Availability**

### **Observer Notification Expectation**

Vessel assignment may come with very short notice (<4 hrs), sometimes as little as two or three hours before vessel departure. Selected fishing vessels are required to give 24-hour notice to the WCGOP before entering a fishery and must then give a 4-hour notice for each trip. This, however, does not mean that observers should expect to get 24-hour or even 4-hour notification before every trip. Although lead observers and coordinators attempt to provide as much notice as possible before the start of an trip, the coordination of multiple vessels and observers in multiple ports sometimes necessitates short notice. Short notice occurs occasionally when there is a:

- Change in observer availability (sick or vacationing observers)
- Miscommunication between observer/vessel/coordinator
- Weather changes

Be prepared to embark on a vessel or to travel to another port group with little notice by having sampling and safety gear ready at all times.



**Tip\*** Observers are not commonly assigned trips on short notice, but on the rare occasion that it occurs, be ready!!

In most cases leads and coordinators avoid calling late at night. However, observers may be called to cover an early morning trip when extenuating circumstances occur.

While every effort is made to inform observers of assignments, situations change and assignments may change as a result. When vessel activity is slow in a port group, observers are frequently sent on travel to cover other ports. **Remember: Vessel assignments can be changed at any time.**

### **Time-Off**

WCGOP observers are on call at all times. Observers must be granted time off from AOI on days in which they are not prepared to take an assignment. Observers are expected to be prepared for assignment any time while under contract unless they have been approved for time off.

Observers must be prepared to work the moment that leave expires (midnight of the last day requested). Messages should be checked upon the end of the granted leave or before. An observer is expected to be ready if needed at 0001 the morning after official time-off expires.

**Note:** Observers are expected to maintain open lines of communication with their leads and coordinators with regards to being on call. With open communication, more flexibility may be possible at your coordinator or lead's discretion.

## **Requesting Time-Off**

Time-off needs to be approved by AOI, who consults with program staff regarding time-off requests. While time-off can be discussed with coordinators, final approval must be granted by AOI.

AOI will provide a time off request policy to all observers. The policy explains the steps to take to request time off and the rules AOI has regarding time off requests.

## **Illness and Injury**

**If ill or injured, contact the field coordinator and contractor (AOI) immediately.** Most of the situations where observers were required to take trips on short notice occurred due to other observers calling at the last minute to inform their lead/coordinator that they were unfit to cover a trip assignment. With proper communication these short notice trips can be avoided.



**Tip\*** Observers should contact the field coordinator and contractor as soon as a cold or illness is suspected. Coordinators can then provide adequate notice to a replacement observer. The earlier the notice is given, the more time the coordinator has to inform the replacement observer of the upcoming assignment.



## **VII. Traveling Out of Port**

### **Port Boundaries**

Observers are expected to remain within a reasonable distance to their home ports as assignments may arise unexpectedly. Four hours is a general guideline, but in many cases, is too far away. Open communication with your coordinator when more than 2 hours out of the home port

is recommended. If necessary, lead observers and coordinators may require an Observer to remain even closer to their home ports.

### **Covering Other Ports**

Observers may cover several different ports and should be prepared to travel at all times within their assigned port group. Typically, greater notice will be given if travel outside of the home port group is required .

**Note:** Occasionally observers will embark in one port and disembark in another (often hundreds of miles away). Coordinators and AOI will provide assistance in returning to the home port in these situations.

### **Preparedness**

Little notice may be given prior to travel so it is important to have sampling/safety gear packed and ready to go at all times. In addition, it helps to have clothes (including an extra pair of street clothes) ready at all times.

Observers are required to own and maintain a working vehicle. If a vehicle needs repairs, secure alternate transportation. Observers must be taken off pay if alternative transportation is not available. Vehicle problems do not excuse Observers from covering vessels or travel. Chronic vehicle problems will not be tolerated. The lead observer or coordinator must be notified at the first sign of car problems; they may be able to work around the problem short term if given advance notice. Ultimately, however, a working vehicle must be maintained.



## VIII. Data Collection and Data Entry

### Data Collection

Data is collected for approximately two-months (one trip period) and then debriefed with program staff. During this two-month period, observers may be assigned to one or multiple vessels operating in different fisheries and may employ many sampling methods. Be familiar with the sampling protocols for the gear type to be observed before embarking on a trip. This will ensure the correct equipment and forms are brought and hopefully, ease some anxiety. The observer manual and field manual, as well as debriefers and more experienced observers, are excellent tools for learning about new gear types and fisheries.

### Data Entry

After returning from a trip, budget time for data entry. The following information is entered into the WCGOP Database:

- **Data** - All data collected on vessels, including information on Trip Forms, Catch Forms, Species Composition Forms, Length Frequency Forms, Biospecimen Forms, and Marine Mammal/Seabird/Sea Turtle Sightings and Interaction Forms.
- **Activity** - Observers should have their activity entered no later than the 3rd of each month.
- **Communications** - All communications with vessels.



## IX. DEBRIEFING

Data collected by West Coast Groundfish Observers is vital to the successful management of many fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California. In order to ensure that data are consistently collected according to program

guidelines, observers are required to go through a debriefing process every two months.

The debriefing process consists of six steps.

1. Data review by observer
2. Data submission
3. Data review by debriefer
4. Data correction
5. Interview
6. Written Evaluation

### **Data Review by Observer**

#### *Trip Data*

Prior to submitting data to debriefers, all calculations and forms must be double-checked for accuracy and legibility. All data must be entered into the WCGOP database and a trip error report must be run for every trip. Any errors detected need to be corrected and any warnings must be double-checked for accuracy before submitting data to debriefers.

The following checklist will help to catch mistakes prior to submitting data. Keep the checklist handy and refer to it when data is being edited. This list is not all-inclusive. Refer to the form instructions for each gear type for a detailed listing of how to complete each form.

#### **Trip Form / Hauls:**

- Year is recorded as YYYY.
- Fishery Type is circled (LE, OA, EFP). If EFP, name of EFP must be written on the form.
- USCG number recorded for any vessel that has one. If no USCG number, then State Registration Number recorded.

- Pages are numbered.
- Vessel Logbook page number field completed for LE trawlers only. If non-LE trawl vessels maintain a logbook, record the number in the Trip Notes section.
- Landing and Departure dates are recorded as MM/DD.
- Landing and Departure times are recorded in 24-hour notation.
- Fish Ticket and State Agency Code recorded. If there was no fish ticket issued for a trip (no fish delivered) include a note indicating this in the Trip Notes field.
- Check that all OTC's, Volumes, and Densities are recorded to two decimal places.
- OTC keypunch check is completed.
- Verify that Total Hooks/Pots field is filled in for all fixed gear sets.
- Total Hooks/Pots keypunch check is completed.
- Gear Performance Codes recorded for all hauls.



### **Trip Form/ Haul Locations:**

- Hauls/Sets numbered sequentially by retrieval time.
- Latitude and Longitude recorded in degrees, minutes, and 1/100<sup>th</sup>s of a minute.
- Verify that target strategy codes are valid.
- Check that both Depth of Catch fields per haul/set are completed. If only one depth is available, write it in both fields.
- Verify that all trip notes are entered verbatim into the database.

### **Catch Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.

- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch # column is filled in sequentially.
- Volume and Density columns are filled in for any catch category with weight method 2 or 10(trawl/prawn catch form).
- Weights, volumes, and densities are recorded to two decimal places (trawl/prawn catch form).
- # of Fish column completed for weight methods 8, 9 and if an actual # for methods 4 and 6 as well (Trawl/Prawn Catch form).
- # of Fish column completed for weight methods 4, 6 and 9 (Fixed Gear Catch form).
- Discard Reason column is filled in only for discard catch categories with no associated species composition sample.
- # Hooks/Pots sampled column filled in (Fixed Gear Catch form). All fixed gear catch categories in a given haul MUST have the same number of sampled Hooks/Pots.
- # Hooks/Pots keypunch check is completed (Fixed Gear Catch form).
- Sample/Catch Weight keypunch check is completed.

### **Species Composition Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Sample Method codes are 1, 2 or 3 for trawl, and 4, 5, or 6 for fixed gear.

- R or D column filled in for all catch categories.
- KP Weight and KP Number fields are completed for every catch category.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Discard reasons are recorded for all discarded species.

### **Length Frequency Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Sex column is filled in only if an attempt was made to ascertain the sex of the individual. If no attempt was made, leave the field blank.
- Key punch checks (length and frequency) are completed for all species.
- Verify that individuals that are recorded on the Biospecimen Form are **NOT** recorded on the Length Frequency Form also. If any information other than sex and length are collected, record the information only on the Biospecimen Form.

### **Biospecimen Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.

- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Sex column is filled in only if an attempt was made to ascertain the sex of the individual. If no attempt was made, leave the field blank.
- Never record sex for Pacific Halibut.
- Verify that Pacific Halibut Viability Codes are for the appropriate Gear Type.
- Verify that individuals that are recorded on the Biospecimen Form are **NOT** recorded on the Length Frequency Form also. If any information other than sex and length are collected, record the information only on the Biospecimen Form.

#### **Trip Discard Form:**

- Page is numbered.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Date discard occurred recorded as MM/DD.
- Time discard occurred recorded in 24-hour notation.
- Common name of species discarded recorded.



#### **MM/SB/ST Sightings and Interactions Form:**

- Date, time, and location fields completed.
- Species name recorded.
- Narrative includes key characteristic used to identify the animal.

- Sketch of animal completed.
- All behaviors and interactions are circled and documented in the narrative.
- Photo/Videos barcode and frame #s recorded.
- Trip Number recorded.
- Federal Groundfish Permit Number recorded (if vessel has one).
- USCG number or State Registration number recorded in Coast Guard documentation # field.

### **Tagged Fish Form:**

- All fields completed.
- Tag attached securely to form.
- Otolith vial attached to form if otoliths collected.

### **Observer Logbook:**

Make sure that all required sections of the logbook are completely filled out. These include but are not limited to:

- Name and trip limit period (including year) clearly noted on logbook cover.
- Vessel and captain name, documentation number and dates aboard documented for each vessel covered.
- Vessel safety checklists completed and signed for all vessels observed.
- Scale calibrations and maintenance documented.
- Detailed vessel diagrams completed for all vessels covered. Any calculations double-checked for accuracy.
- Comprehensive descriptions of all OTC, Catch Category and Species Composition weight/sample methods utilized for each vessel covered. Include details of how random sampling techniques were implemented.
- Daily Notes completed for each day at sea, with thorough documentation of sampling strategies,

problems encountered, interesting encounters, etc. including safety concerns and difficulty with crew.

### **Data Submission**

In general, data collected by observers are sent to their debriefers. However, several items are always shipped to the Newport Office. Specifics on where to send each type of data are summarized below.

<b>ITEM:</b>	<b>SHIP TO:</b>
Trip Data	Debriefers
Logbook	Debriefers
Species ID Forms	Debriefers
Otoliths	Debriefers
Salmon Scales	Debriefers
Snout	Newport Office
Tissue Samples	Newport Office

Data should be submitted either in person or via FedEx according to the following schedule; however, be aware that debriefers may ask for data earlier or later than this schedule:

All Trip Data, Species ID Forms, Otoliths and Salmon Scales are due monthly as follows:

<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
January	February 10th	July	August 10th
February	<b>*March 10th</b>	August	<b>*September 10th</b>
March	April 10th	September	October 10th
April	<b>*May 10th</b>	October	<b>*November 10th</b>
May	June 10th	November	December 10th
June	<b>*July 10th</b>	December	<b>*January 10th</b>

\*Logbooks due

Group data **by trip**, with forms arranged in the following order:

- Trip Form(s)
- Haul data - hauls in sequential order with each haul's forms arranged in the following order:
  - a. Catch Form(s)
  - b. Species Composition Form(s)
  - c. Length Frequency Form(s)
  - d. Biospecimen Form(s)
- Trip Discard Form(s)
- Marine Mammal Sighting, Tagged Fish, and/or Seabird Sighting Form(s)

Salmon Scales

- Attach scale envelopes to the associated trip data with paper clips.

Otolith Vials

- Bundle and **clearly label** (with trip # and haul #) all otolith vials for trips being sent. Otoliths should be grouped by trip and, if more than 10

specimens have been collected for a single trip, by haul.

**Logbooks** should be submitted with trip data at the end of each two-month period (highlighted due dates).

**Snouts, tissue samples, and coral specimens** should be sent to the Newport Office as soon as possible **after** the debriefing interview is completed. All specimens must be brought to the debriefing interview so that the barcode numbers can be verified, but it is the observer's responsibility to ship the specimens to Newport after the interview.

**REMEMBER!** Due dates are the dates that data **must be received by** the debriefer, not the day it needs to be sent. Keep up with paper work and computer entry. If it looks as if data is due during the dates of a scheduled trip, you must submit your data prior to leaving port! Debriefers may request that data be sent earlier than in the schedule outlined above. Instances where this might occur include:

- New observers will be requested to submit data after their first or first few trips to allow for an early evaluation of sampling procedures.
- Observers leaving the program so that a debriefing can be conducted prior to the contract end date.
- Any other instance at the discretion of the debriefer.

### **Data Review by Debiefer**

When trip data is received, the debriefer double checks sampling strategies, all calculations and forms, and verifies that barcode numbers on the paper forms match those on the otolith vials and scale envelopes submitted. All data forms with errors are flagged. The trips containing errors

and a list detailing what needs to be corrected are returned to the observer.

Debriefers review the observer logbooks bimonthly. The logbook allows debriefers to become familiar with the sampling methods employed on the vessels covered prior to the interview.



### **Data Correction**

Checked data is flagged and returned with the list of errors. Corrections must be made in a timely manner to both the paper forms **and** the database! Always be sure to carry corrections through all forms and rerun the Trip Error Report after updating corrections in the database.

### **Interview**

Once all required materials have been received and reviewed, a meeting time will be arranged. The debriefing interview is a vital part of the observer's job. The interview is the observer's chance to demonstrate understanding of the methods learned in training and proficiency at applying them in the field. It is also an opportunity to give personal insights to WCGOP personnel about potential improvements to the program.

Any mistakes, paper and/or electronic, that have not been corrected prior to the debriefing interview must be corrected at that time.

### **Written Evaluation**

Observers receive an evaluation for each debriefing. Evaluations are broken down into eight categories. Each category covers different portions of the job and has different criteria that are considered. Following is a list of the categories observers are evaluated on and some of the criteria that will be measured.

### **Category 1: Sampling Procedures**

*Criteria A:* Proper sampling procedures employed

*Criteria B:* Random sampling implemented and documented

### **Category 2: Data Forms**

*Criteria A:* Forms are complete

*Criteria B:* Forms are legible

*Criteria C:* Forms are organized

*Criteria D:* Forms are relatively error free

*Criteria E:* Data documentation is consistent

*Criteria F:* Fish ticket numbers are present

*Criteria G:* Vessel logbook numbers are present

*Criteria H:* Data entry acceptable

### **Category 3: Sample Size**

*Criteria A:* Sample size meets program requirements

### **Category 4: Calculations**

*Criteria A:* Calculations are written out

*Criteria B:* Calculations are correct

*Criteria C:* Formulas are written out

*Criteria D:* Formulas are correct

### **Category 5: Species Identification**

*Criteria A:* Species ID forms are legible and neat

*Criteria B:* Species ID forms are completed for all new species seen

### **Category 6: Observer Logbook**

*Criteria A:* All sections are completed

*Criteria B:* Vessel safety checks are mailed to coordinator prior to first trip

*Criteria C:* Scale calibration is completed according to protocol

*Criteria D:* Notes and descriptions are detailed

### **Category 7: Attitude/Reliability/Flexibility**

*Criteria A:* Trips are not missed

*Criteria B:* Observer maintains professionalism with Coordinator, Debriefer, Lead Observer, and other Observers

*Criteria C:* Observer interacts well with the fleet, staff and other Observers

*Criteria D:* Observer readily accepts assignments and tasks

*Criteria E:* Observer completes shore duties in a timely manner

### **Category 8: Communication**

*Criteria A:* Communications from WCGOP staff, Lead Observer, and other Observers are made/ returned promptly and professionally

*Criteria B:* Communications to or from vessels are made/ returned promptly and professionally

*Criteria C:* Communications to or from vessels are entered in the database daily.

*Criteria D:* Calls to "Observer Trip Notification Phone System" are made promptly

*Criteria E:* Activity is completed promptly

Evaluations include written comments on each category. Although there are no numerical scores associated with the evaluation, each category's comments will include notes on both **Accomplishments** (areas in which the Observer met or exceeded program expectations) and **Areas for Improvement** (areas in which program expectations were not met - this may be left blank if all expectations were met or exceeded). If there are serious problems with data quality or any other portion of an observer's duties, or if the same deficiencies are repeatedly noted as 'Areas for Improvement' the evaluation may include **Tasks or Requirements**.

## **Tasks and Requirements**

**Tasks** are duties the observer **must** complete prior to the next debriefing or prior to an assigned date. Examples of Tasks include re-reading a specific chapter of the manual to improve understanding of sampling protocols or a stringent guideline requiring the completion of a duty neglected in previous periods (e.g. Species ID forms must be completed for all new species encountered). If a Task is not completed by the time of the next evaluation it will be noted as a Requirement.

**Requirements** are duties the observer must complete or disciplinary action will be taken. In addition to unfulfilled Tasks, problems that severely affect an observer's ability to adequately perform their job may be listed as Requirements. Examples of such items include an observer refusing to follow proper sampling protocol, or significant problems with communication and/or attitude. Any time a Requirement is listed the following items will also be documented:

1. Consequences if Requirement is not satisfactorily met.
2. Timeline in which Requirement must be met.

A mid-cruise debriefing must be done within a month of any evaluation containing a requirement.

Normally a draft evaluation is presented at the interview. During the interview, observers may make clarifications that could potentially lead to modifications of the draft evaluation. A final evaluation will be made available on the database after the interview is completed. Observers are required to read and sign off on evaluations in the WCGOP database. The evaluation may be edited until the observer signs off on it. If an observer feels that their evaluation does not fairly represent the job they have done, they may contact their debriefer directly or, if they are uncomfortable doing that, may contact the lead debriefer or the Team

Lead. By signing an evaluation, the observer verifies that they have seen the evaluation regardless of whether or not they agree with its contents. AOI will monitor the status of evaluations and will contact observers who have not signed off on recent evaluations.



## **X. Maintaining WCGOP Observer Status**

Observers continuing with the program must:

1. Adhere to WCGOP Standards of Conduct, Data Confidentiality, and Conflict of Interest requirements. (see Chapter 2, “West Coast Groundfish Observer Program ”)
2. Demonstrate proficiency during each trip.
3. Receive satisfactory performance evaluations.
4. Maintain current First Aid and CPR certifications.
5. Pass a yearly fish test.
6. Complete a yearly WCGOP-approved safety training course.
7. Participate in an annual briefing and meeting.

**CHAPTER 10**  
**Observer Life**